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## JACOB'S ZODIAC.

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Why the astronomical basis of the language of Jacob in Gen. XLIX so escapes the notice of scholars will probably be a puzzle to all who once observe it. The matter is before us in this way :

The division of the apparent path of the sun in the heavens into twelve equal portions, each named after the names given to the principal constellation of each, is of unknown origin and date. The names and the symbols now used can be traced through Latin and Egyptian sources to about the second Christian century. The Babylonians claimed to have recorded consecutive astronomical observations from before 2200 B. C. to the time of Alexander. A Babylonian stone, among other symbols, shows about half the familiar emblems of the zodiacal constellations.

The order of the zodiacal constellations and their names are as follows: Ram, Bull, Twins, Crab, Lion, Virgin, Scales, Scorpion, Archer, Goat, Water-bearer, Fishes.

When Joseph dreamed of the obeisance of the stars (Gen. xxxvii, 9) and related his dream, he did not say that his brothers' stars made obeisance to his star, but to himself, yet the ready interpretation of his father suggests that the family were familiar with some sort of appropriation of the stars and their emblems among the sons of Jacob.

When Jacob gave his final blessing to his children, he used language which was partly prophetic and partly poetic. And the separation of the poetical and figurative from the prophetical has not usually been carefully made. It should be observed that each child is spoken of in terms which are either a direct recognition of some symbol as connected with him, or suggest one and seem to be suggested by it.

If an examination of these symbolical references should show that only three of the emblems are identical with three of the set of twelve in the signs of the zodiac, the common methods of logicians in such compu-

tations would show it to be entirely improbable that the identity is accidental. That six should be identical, and the rest even half plausibly so, by accident is morally impossible.

Examining the language of Jacob we find him directly calling Judah a lion, Issachar an ass, Dan a serpent, Naphtali a hind, Joseph a bough; but, of all these, other figurative language is used which suggests other emblems more forcibly in some cases than the emblems named are presented.

If we examine successively the addresses to or about the sons we find Reuben spoken of as water unstable or bubbling or spilled. If he had the water-bearer as his symbol the reference is intelligible, as it scarcely is otherwise. Simeon and Levi, brothers born of the same mother and joined in a notable deed, are coupled. If their symbol was the Twins, they are appropriately referred to. If any critic deems our conjecture strained because Simeon and Levi were not twins, it may be answered to him that the common name Gemini does not usually mean anything but paired or doubled, and that Castor and Pollux, as some named the stars, or Apollo and Hercules as others named them, were not twins.

Zebulun receives promises, but no symbol is directly indicated. His border never reached very near to Zidon, but touched two seas. The word Zidon should have been translated *fishery*. His emblem then would have been a sea, a harbor, ships or fishes. If it was fishes the language is intelligible.

Issachar in the Hebrew is חֲמֹר גֵּרָם a bony ass. In the Syriac he is גִּבְרָא גִּבְרָא (גִּבְרָא) a mighty man, equivalent to Hebrew גִּבְרָא גִּבְרָא. The LXX evidently read חֲמֹר חֲמֹר hath desired pleasantness, with much appearance of correctness. The Bull is the only sign that is not needed for another child of Jacob; but the Bull is as appropriate a name for the constellation as the Ass, and so slight a change, where all is fantastical, is easily explicable. The difference between the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Syriac suggests questions as to the correct text. The Syriac reading suggests that Orion may have been the original constellation which gave name to the section of the sky now named the Bull, which it could do quite as appropriately as some other sections give names to their sections. But since the Syriac version, like all others, seems unconscious of any astronomical reference, it is more probable that the

change of text occurred about the fourth century B. C. when the Hebrew and Estranghelo letters were differentiated, and was a blunder. Possibly even **חֲמֹר** was made out of **הֶפֶר** as it easily would have been at that same era. With the Hebrew we call Issachar a strong beast of service. What is said of him better suits the bull than the ass.

Dan's emblem is not named, but hinted. It is said that he shall be **נָחֵשׁ** and **שָׂפִיפֹן**. The first is a somewhat generic name for venomous creatures. The most significant symbolism is seen in the prophecy that he shall bite a horse's heel; for if Issachar has any sign in the zodiac it must be the Scorpion, and it happens that the Hebrew name for a scorpion, **עֶקְרָב**, seems to be a compound of **עָקַר** to wound, and **עָקֵב** heel (so Gesenius).

Gad's symbol is obscurely hinted at. There is something about him suggestive of gregariousness and combativeness. His name means troop; but a troop cannot be figured as a symbol, unless by some gregarious animal like a goat; and it is remarkable, if not significant, that the name **גָּד** is so nearly the same as the Latin *hædus*, Anglo Saxon *gat*, Danish *geed*, English *goat*, and the Hebrew for kid is **גִּדִּי**.

Asher's symbol is obscurely hinted. The Syriac version reads differently, viz: Asher's land is good, etc. The promise is luxurious living or royalty. There is a suggestion of royalty, perhaps of a red color. Whether the Crab was his symbol is an open question.

Naphtali is called **אֵילָה**, a feminine form of the word which means a ram. Gesenius says it may mean a she-goat, or a hind, or a big sheep. That his sign was a sheep, even a ram, can scarcely be doubted.

Joseph is spoken of as an archer too plainly for doubt.

Benjamin is spoken of as a wolf, but the basis of the figurative language is the idea of division, and might well be formed around the symbol of the scales.

Eleven symbols only are thus suggested; but in the zodiac there remains the Virgin, and as a child of Jacob remains Dinah. The circle is complete.

We resurvey our comparison, putting in a first column the names of Jacob's children; in the second the characteristics ascribed to them; in the third the apparent symbol of each; and in the fourth the signs of the zodiac:

Reuben.	Water troubled.	Water bearer.	Water-bearer.
Simeon and Levi.	Brothers joined.	Brothers joined.	Brothers joined.
Judah.	Lion.	Lion.	Lion.
Zebulun.	Sea, Ships, Fishery.	Fishes.	Fishes.
Issachar.	Strength, Service.	Ass.	Bull.
Dan.	Venom, Lurking.	Scorpion.	Scorpion.
Gad.	Gregariousness and pugnacity.	Goat.	Goat.
Asher.	Rich food, Royal luxuries.		Crab.
Naphtali.	Big Sheep.	Big Sheep.	Ram.
Joseph.	Archery.	Archer.	Archer.
Benjamin.	Tearing, Division.	Wolf or Scales.	Scales.
Dinah.			Virgin.

Whether or not the signs of the zodiac received their names from the children of Jacob, and these names have come to us through the Israelites may never be discovered. Certainly there is an appearance of an Israelite modification, if not an Israelite origination of the common phantasy, of the Zodiac.

A more probable inference is that the recognition of the ecliptic and the Zodiac was common in Aram, and that to each of Jacob's children was assigned the constellation under which each was born, and we are thus furnished with data for reckoning the length of Jacob's stay in Aram.

A computation on this basis gives a result nearly corresponding with the common reckonings.

In the references to the Zodiac by Jacob, we have a new argument for the antiquity of the narrative, for the addresses so simply recorded have none of the marks of a designed and forged adoption by a more recent writer. The omission of Dinah's name, the obscurity of some of the allusions, and the various readings bear testimony to the antiquity, authenticity and simple naturalness of the narrative. If it had been a late forgery some betraying tokens would have appeared in versions and commentaries, and the coincidence with the zodiacal signs could not have been overlooked as it has been.